

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5416

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 VIENNA 02031

E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS: PINT, AU
SUBJECT: POLITICAL FALLOUT FROM GOETZ VICTORY IN GRAZ

REF: VIENNA 00853

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: FREEDOM PARTY (FPO) GOETZ'S BIG ELECTION WIN IN GRAZ IN JANUARY HAS GENERATED MAJOR POLITICAL FALLOUT REACHING NATIONAL IMPORTANCE. PEOPLE'S PARTY (OVP) REJECTED LAST WEEK SOCIALIST PARTY (SPO) BID TO OUST GOETZ AS MAYOR OF GRAZ; INSTEAD, OVP REENTERED GRAZ COALITION, GIVING MAYOR'S POST AGAIN TO GOETZ. THIS MOVE SEEN AS SMALLER SACRIFICE BY OVP FOR POTENTIALLY GREATER GAIN OF GOETZ'S AND FPO'S SYMPATHY AND HOPED-FOR CONTINUATION IN COMING PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS OF GOETZ'S CURRENT STRONG ANTI-SOCIALIST STANCE. GOETZ VICTORY HAS ALSO STARTED POLITICAL ECLIPSE OF LONG-TIME FPO LEADER PETER WHOM GOETZ WILL REPLACE IN FALL 1978. GOETZ SEEMS TO HAVE MAKINGS OF SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL POLITICAL LEADER BUT BIG TEST OF HIS POLITICAL STAYING POWER WILL COME IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN FALL OF 1979. END SUMMARY.

2. MAYOR GOETZ'S RECENT MAJOR ELECTION VICTORY IN GRAZ (REFTEL) HAS ALREADY HAD SOME IMPORTANT REPERCUSSIONS ON
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AUSTRIAN NATIONAL POLITICAL SCENE. GOETZ, WHO EMPHASIZED IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN HIS OWN EFFECTIVENESS AS CITY ADMINISTRATOR AND NOT PARTY AFFILIATION, WAS SOLE VICTOR IN GRAZ MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, INCREASING FPO REPRESENTATION FROM 9 TO 14 SEATS BY TAKING 3 SEATS FROM SPO (NOW 23) AND 2 SEATS FROM OVP (NOW 18).

3. SOCIALISTS WERE GREATLY DISAPPOINTED WITH ELECTION OUTCOME SINCE THEIR MAJOR OBJECTIVE HAS BEEN TO RECAPTURE GRAZ CITY HALL, WHICH THEY LOST IN 1973 IN WAKE OF OVP-FPO COALITION IN WHICH FPO JUNIOR PARTNER WAS GIVEN OFFICE OF MAYOR. FOLLOWING HECTIC, AGONIZING ROUND OF MEETINGS LAST WEEK, OVP OPTED TO REENTER COALITION WITH FPO, OFFERING MAYOR'S POST AGAIN TO GOETZ.

4. OVP TOOK DECISION WITH VIEW TO ITS PROBABLE IMPACT ON PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS WHICH ARE SCHEDULED OVER NEXT TWO YEARS. IT WAS FELT THAT GOETZ IN OPPOSITION IN GRAZ WOULD COMPLICATE PROVINCIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN FOR OVP WHICH HAS HAD FOR MANY YEARS STRONG ANTI-SOCIALIST PROFILE IN STYRIA.

5. PROBABLY MORE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION FOR OVP ACTION, BASED SOLELY ON SPECULATION AT MOMENT, IS THAT SPO WILL BE UNSUCCESSFUL IN FALL OF 1979 IN AGAIN WINNING ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. SUCH DEVELOPMENT WOULD OPEN WAY TO FORMATION OF COALITION GOVERNMENT OF ONE COLORATION OR OTHER. BY "SACRIFICING" POST OF MAYOR TO GOETZ NOW, OVP THEORETICALLY HAS GAINED FAVOR WITH GOETZ WHO IS KNOWN FOR HIS RATHER STRONG SOCIALIST ANTIPATHIES.

6. GOETZ VICTORY ALSO TRIGGERED BEGINNING OF POLITICAL DEMISE OF FRIEDRICH PETER, LONG-TIME FPO NATIONAL CHAIRMAN. PETER, IT SHOULD BE RECALLED, WAS DENOUNCED BY SIMON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WIESENTHAL IN FALL OF 1975 AS HAVING BEEN MEMBER OF NOTORIOUS SS EXECUTION BRIGADE IN USSR DURING WORLD WAR II AND THEREFORE HARDLY FIT TO HOLD POLITICAL OFFICE. KREISKY WHO CAME TO DEFENSE OF PETER ON JUDICIAL GROUNDS (PETER WAS NEVER CHARGED BEFORE COURT WITH WAR CRIMES) SOLIDIFIED PETER'S STANDING WITHIN FPO AND GAINED HIS POLITICAL INDEBTEDNESS. AS A RESULT, PETER SUBSEQUENTLY AVOIDED MORE THAN EVER TAKING STRONG STAND AGAINST SOCIALISTS, A STANCE WHICH HAS SAPPED POLITICAL CREDIBILITY OF FPO.

7. YOUNGER FPO ELEMENTS TRIED WITHOUT SUCCESS ON SEVERAL EARLIER OCCASIONS TO OUST PETER FROM CHAIRMANSHIP BECAUSE OF HIS LONG-TERM LACK OF POLITICAL SUCCESS (IN 20-YEAR PETER STEWARDSHIP NATIONAL FPO VOTE DROPPED FROM 340,000 TO 250,000). SUCH EFFORTS, HOWEVER, ALWAYS FALTERED ON UNWILLINGNESS OF POTENTIAL CANDIDATE TO CHALLENGE PETER PUBLICLY FOR LEADERSHIP OF PARTY.

8. GOETZ'S ELECTION FEAT IN PARTY WITH RECORD OF CONTINUOUS LOSSES HAS AMAZED FPO PROVINCIAL LEADERS AND THEY NATURALLY WISH TO APPLY SAME CAMPAIGN MAGIC ELSEWHERE

IN AUSTRIA. HENCE THEY ACTED QUICKLY WHEN ISSUE OF REPLACING PETER WAS RAISED AT FPO NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING ON FEBRUARY 25 AND UNANIMOUSLY ELECTED GOETZ AS CANDIDATE FOR NATIONAL CHAIRMANSHIP AT FPO PARTY CONGRESS IN FALL OF 1978. PETER GAVE UP HIS OWN HALF-HEARTED ATTEMPT TO STEM PRO-GOETZ EUPHORIA AND ANNOUNCED HE WOULD BE "GOOD POLITICAL SOLDIER" AND SUPPORT GOETZ'S LEADERSHIP. FPO NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD ACCEPTED GOETZ'S CONDITIONS FOR NOMINATION, NAMELY THAT HE REMAIN AS MAYOR IN GRAZ AND CONDUCT PARTY AFFAIRS FROM STYRIAN CAPITAL. THIS COMPLICATED ARRANGEMENT MAY CAUSE CONTROVERSY LATER

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SINCE PETER WILL REMAIN AS PARTY PARLIAMENTARY FLOOR LEADER IN VIENNA AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO CULTIVATE HIS KNOWN CLOSE RELATIONSHIP TO SOCIALIST CHANCELLOR KREISKY. HOWEVER, IT IS EXPECTED THAT GOETZ WILL MOVE QUICKLY TO SET STAGE FOR BOTH ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES AND POLICY SHIFTS IN FPO. SUCH CHANGES ARE EXPECTED TO INCLUDE NEARLY COMPLETE GENERATIONAL TURNOVER IN FPO TOP LEADERSHIP BY END OF 1979.

9. GOETZ'S POLITICAL PROFILE SUGGESTS HE HAS MOST OF ATTRIBUTES OF SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL LEADER. HE IS RELATIVELY YOUNG (50 YEARS) AND HAS LOTS OF POLITICAL EMPATHY AND CHARISMA. POLITICS HAS BEEN HIS LIFE'S WORK AND HIS BASIC APPEAL IS THAT OF PERSONAL INITIATIVE AND RESPONSIBILITY OVER ALL CONSUMING SOCIAL WELFARE STATE. GOETZ WILL NOT HAVE AN EASY TASK IN PROJECTING THIS IMAGE NATIONALLY. HIS ENTRY INTO NATIONAL POLITICAL ARENA, HOWEVER, BRINGS WITH IT PROMISE OF SOME POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND CHANGE, PARTICULARLY IF GOETZ SHOULD DEVELOP INTO REAL

PR THREAT TO AUSTRIA'S DOMINANT POLITICAL FIGURE,
SOCIALIST PARTY CHAIRMAN AND CHANCELLOR KREISKY. GOETZ
WILL HAVE UNTIL FALL 1979 TO PROVE HE CAN MAKE THE
DIFFERENCE FOR AUSTRIA'S SMALL BUT NEWLY INVIGORATED
FREEDOM PARTY AND THAT HE IS NOT MERELY A PASSING
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POLITICAL COMET ON AUSTRIAN SCENE. WOLF

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Message Attributes

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